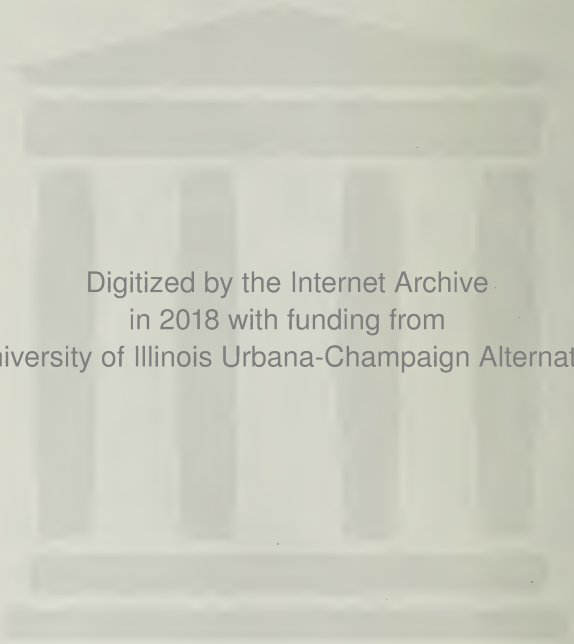


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# NEWTON'S VAUDEVILLE SKETCHES.

PRICE 25 CENTS.



## A HARMLESS FLIRTATION.



A one Act Comedy  
By JEFFREY T. BRANEN.

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By H. L. NEWTON PUB. Co.,  
CHICAGO.

CHARACTERS:

*Jessie Davenport*,—Daughter of a well to do Business Man.

*Sellum Shure*,—An up-to-date Book Agent.

*Count von Rensselaer*,—A German Count.

*Charlie Hopkins*,—In love with *Jessie*.

} Double.

SCENE:

Dining room in modern flat. Costumes: Modern.

Dining table Right of Center and opposite 2nd Entrance. Screen back stage. Sideboard against back drop. On sideboard have large glass bowl, with gold fish; also pieces of carrots made to represent gold fish.



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"A HARMLESS FLIRTATION."

DIALOGUE.

*Curtain to Jessie putting finishing touches on setting table for dinner.*

JESSIE. Well, at last I have papa's lunch ready for him, and I do wish he would come. I prepared it earlier than usual this evening, as I expect Count von Rensseler soon to take me out to dine with him. Now I wonder what Charlie would say were he to know that I intend dining with a real count.... Ah, well! what he doesn't know won't hurt him. And besides, my appointment with the Count is merely the outcome of a harmless little flirtation on my part. I met him on the street while I was out shopping, and I could not resist the temptation to flirt with him. He seemed to fall desperately in love with me at first sight; asked permission to call on me this evening and take me to dine at the Blue Pencil Club. Oh, I do wish papa would come! I wonder what can be detaining him? [*Quick, nervous steps heard outside.*] Ah, here he comes at last. [*Runs to entrance with outstretched arms.*]

*Enter Sellum Shure.*

JESSIE [*throws arms about his neck and kisses him*]. My own dear papa!

SHURE [*very much pleased*]. Do it again—

JESSIE [*indignantly*]. Who are you, sir?

SHURE. Why, I'm your papa—kiss papa again. [*Holds up face.*]

JESSIE [*very indignantly*]. How dare you enter my house in this manner? Who are you?

SHURE [*takes out business card, presents it*]. Have a card. [*Removes hat and gloves in business-like manner.*]

JESSIE [*takes card and looks at obverse side*]. This does not explain anything.

SHURE [*not looking at her*]. Turn over.

JESSIE [*surprised*]. Turn over? [*Looks about, then turns card over.*] Oh, a book agent!

SHURE [*bowing very low*]. Yes, a dear, sweet, innocent little book agent. [*Draws small book out of hip pocket.*]

JESSIE. Sir, this is impertinent!

SHURE [*turning leaves of book excitedly*]. Ah, so it is: "IMPERTINENT" in red ink; easily found and well defined. Any information whatsoever may be obtained by referring to this little volume. [*Stepping towards her.*] Now, my dear young lady, I am here for the purpose of selling you this little library of fundamental knowledge. I have here this little book, beautifully illustrated, extra large type, bound in calf, with a "tail" on the inside.

JESSIE. I tell you I don't want it.

SHURE. Pardon me, you do but don't know it. Everything

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worth knowing is contained in this little book. Now, turning to page 1, we have a lengthy discourse on Africa, the dark continent. Africa is on the map—it is on every map of Africa you ever saw. Africa is celebrated for its production of roses. It produces the red rose, the white rose and the negroes.

JESSIE. I tell you again I do not want your book. [*Knocks book out of his hand.*]

SHURE. Pardon me, you do but don't know it. Second edition. [*Producing another book.*]

JESSIE. Oh, mercy! what a bore!

SHURE [*turning over leaves*]. Boer, Boer—ah, yes, here it is on page 23. A full and most complete history of the Boer-English war. Everything in connection with Gen. Kirchners' army; how the British captured Birmingham, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and every other dam city of the Dutch Republic.

JESSIE. But I say—

SHURE [*holding up finger*]. Pardon me, you don't say; you only think you do.

JESSIE. I tell you emphatically I do not, and I want you to leave this house immediately.

SHURE. Pardon me, lady, do not interrupt—I've got the floor. Two can't talk at once. It is the height of good breeding to allow one to finish before interrupting them. A lengthy discourse on this subject may be found on page three thousand nine hundred and forty-five of the valuable little book on philosophy—

JESSIE. I don't want to know anything about it. [*Knocks book out of his hand.*]

SHURE [*producing another book*]. Third edition. [*Turning over leaves, reads.*] Whosoever shall interrupt a speaker while he or she, as the case may be, is engaged in conversation, shall be deemed impolite—no exceptions to book agents. . . . That alone, lady, is worth many times the price I ask for this little book, which, though exceedingly low, is by no means a fair estimate of its true value.

JESSIE [*pacing the floor impatiently*]. But I insist I do not want the book—

SHURE. Pardon me, you do but don't know it; and it becomes my painful duty to inform you of what you need. [*Closes book and looks sternly at her.*] I am convinced in this few minutes' conversation with you, in which you have tried to do all the talking—

JESSIE [*breaking in*]. All the talking!

SHURE. That you, of all I have met in my brief sojourn in the capacity of a modern book vender, are most in need of this valuable handiwork. [*Slapping hand with book loudly.*] Why, you juggle with the English language with as much reluctance as a French peasant would with a fresh banana peel. You stumble and fall all over yourself—

JESSIE. Stumble and fall all over myself? Why, you mis-

erable wretch, you contemptible being—it——

SHURE [*breaks in*]. What! You refer to me as IT? In addressing a gentleman of my standing, don't speak so disrespectfully by emphasizing the IT. Just cut that out—forget it. Use better language.

JESSIE. Like you do?

SHURE. No sarcasm, young lady. By constantly applying yourself to this little booklet you will improve in this particular.

JESSIE. This is malicious; an unjust taxation on one's mental faculties.

SHURE. Unjust taxation? [*Turns leaves of book.*] Unjust taxation. Page 14. A correct solution of the problem of unjust taxation, with able discussions along the line of single tax, by Henry George and his disciples. This, lady, is only a fair example of the valuable information contained in the little volume, which, as I have said before, though low in price, is by no means a fair estimate of its true value.

JESSIE. All right, Mr. Book Agent, you may take your book and go.

SHURE. Again, on pages 15 and 16 you will find a list of all the saloons in [*local town*—a topic of double importance. If you are of a drinking turn of mind, it is gratifying to know the number of places where you can quench your thirst——

JESSIE. Sir! I never drink!

SHURE. If, on the other hand, you belong to the W. C. T. U., it is well to know the strength of the enemy before starting a crusade.

JESSIE. Nor do I belong to the W. C. T. U.

SHURE. Then take games, for instance——

JESSIE. But I don't care for games.

SHURE. Pardon me, you do but don't know it. Now I'll bet that you can't even shuffle cards. [*Produces deck of cards.*]

JESSIE. What difference does it make to you whether I can shuffle cards or not?

SHURE. Oh, not the slightest to me—but take pity on your friends when you go to a card party and they are compelled to wait until you have mixed the cards. [*Shuffles cards, then hands deck to her.*]

JESSIE [*takes cards and throws them at Shure*]. I don't want anything to do with your cards.

SHURE [*turning leaves of book rapidly*]. All information pertaining to other games of every description may be found on page four—eleven—forty-four. Here is an unusually interesting chapter devoted to the rivalry of two worthy contestants in a strong act, participated in by a piece of limberger cheese on one hand and an onion on the other, each striving to preside over the ice-box. How would you like to be the iceman?

JESSIE. Oh, such nonsense! [*Knocks book from his hand.*]

SHURE. Fourth edition. [*Produces book from shoe.*] Nonsense—nonsense. [*Turning leaves of book.*] Ah, yes. Nonsense—something that is nothing; thought to be an impossibility. For instance, a hole in a doughnut.

JESSIE [*aside*]. How am I to get rid of him. Papa will be here any minute now, and the Count is liable to be here soon. I suppose the only way is to buy a book.

SHURE [*who has been intently looking at book*]. Ah, here it is: "How to Remove Wrinkles.—If in the trousers, use a hot iron; if in your face, leave the place at once and the wrinkles will go too." And here are also valuable lessons in cooking—

JESSIE. I don't want to know how to cook.

SHURE. How to make a sponge cake.

JESSIE. I don't like sponge cake.

SHURE. Pardon me, you do but don't know it. This is a very fine recipe. Take two quarts of rainwater, add to a medium-sized sponge, makes it soft and palatable. And here, also, is a recipe on how to make money. [*Aside.*] How did I ever overlook this? [*Aloud.*] "Study the art of engraving and then secure a position in the United States mint." [*Looks in disgust at Jessie, then picks up books and cards.*]

JESSIE [*sitting in chair, nearly fainting, then notices his preparation for leaving and rouses up brightly.*] At last he is going. Oh, what a relief! I am so glad!

SHURE [*places things on table and discovers lunch*]. Ah, what an elegant lunch you have here! I see you have been expecting me.

JESSIE. Had I been expecting YOU, I would have instructed my servant to meet you at the back door.

SHURE [*seated at table*]. Gentlemen are never received at the back door. [*Picks up bread.*]

JESSIE. No, but tramps are. Do not molest that, sir; that's papa's lunch.

SHURE. I wonder if you take me for a tramp? As for papa, he won't mind missing his lunch. You may kiss papa when he comes in and that will help some.

JESSIE [*aside*]. Oh, what am I to do?

SHURE. Is this all you have to eat?

JESSIE. I have a meal ticket on the [*local hotel*]. Perhaps that will do.

SHURE [*aside*]. Who ever heard of a fellow eating a meal ticket? [*Tother.*] Well, bring it on. Anything will do to fill in.

JESSIE. How would you like some turkey?

SHURE. TURKEY? [*Nearly faints.*] Let's see the turkey.

JESSIE [*exit and re-enter quickly with turkey*]. [*Aside.*] Perhaps he will leave when he gets filled up.

SHURE. Have you anything to drink?

JESSIE. Yes, here is some wine. Now please hurry, for I am sure if you get over to the next flat before the people go



out, you can sell one of your valuable little books. [*Aside.*] Anything to get rid of him.

SHURE *meanwhile stuffing his mouth full of bread and comedy biz with turkey*].

*Bell rings.*

JESSIE [*rushes to tube*]. Some one comes. Who can it be? [*In tube.*] Hello! Yes. Oh, the Count. [*Aside.*] Oh, what shall I do? [*In tube.*] In just a moment, Count. [*Rushes to Shure, jerks chair from under him—he still remains in air.*] You get out of here now. Oh, mercy!

SHURE. How about the little—

JESSIE. Little nothing. [*Grabs him, slaps book out of his hand and rushes him to door.*]

*Bell rings again loudly.*

JESSIE [*impatently and nervously*]. No, not this way—in here. [*Pushes him towards another entrance.*] No, not there either. [*Pushes him towards door again.*]

*Steps heard outside.*

JESSIE. He is coming up. Here, you, get behind this screen. Oh, this is terrible!

SHURE. I want my book.

*Enter COUNT, bowing and smiling.*

JESSIE [*trying to appear at ease*]. Good evening, Count. I am so glad to see you. [*Aside.*] I don't think.

COUNT. Did you have a forgetfulness dot I ringed de bell?

JESSIE. No, Count, but I am so excited.

SHURE [*tries to reach for book; Jessie sees him and motions him to get back*]. I want my little book.

JESSIE [*pacing floor excitedly with hands to head*].

COUNT. Vy, vat is de matter vith you? Can I do something for you? Shall I remove my hat and coat?

JESSIE. Yes, yes; remove your clothing.

COUNT. Remove my clothing? [*Removes overcoat and hat; hangs coat on rack and places hat on chair.*]

JESSIE. Oh, no, Count, I don't mean that. What am I saying? Remove yourself; that's what I mean. [*Sits down on Count's hat.*]

COUNT. Remove myself? It is much better if you remove yourself from my new hat, is it?

JESSIE [*jumping up excitedly*]. Oh, Count, forgive me. I am crazy—crazy.

COUNT. Too bad! Too bad!

SHURE [*makes noise behind screen*].

JESSIE [*gives a shriek at noise*].

COUNT. Vy, vat es de matter, my dear?

JESSIE. Oh, I have such a headache.

SHURE [*with head over screen*]. Oh, such a headache!

JESSIE. Shut up!

COUNT. Vat's that? Vat noise is that? Can't I get you something? [*Turns towards screen.*]

JESSIE [*shrieks*]. [*Shure ducks down.*]

COUNT. I will go down to the drug store and get you one headache powder. [*Exit.*]

JESSIE [*aside*]. Now is my chance. [*Rushes to Shure.*] Come, you get out of here. [*Rushes him towards door. He forgets his book. Shure breaks away and rushes to table, gets drink, then rushes to hat rack and puts on the Count's coat. Jessie meanwhile has been straightening up screen; turns and sees him with the Count's coat on, grabs him and rushes him behind screen again, saying:—*] Take off the Count's coat.

*Enter* COUNT.

JESSIE [*still holding head*]. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?

COUNT. Here, my dear young lady, is a headache powder for you. I found I had one in my pocket.

JESSIE. But there is no water handy.

COUNT [*produces beer glass from pocket, dips it into fish-bowl on sideboard, and offers glass to her*]. Ach! here is von glass of sparkling water. Now you can take de powder.

JESSIE. But look, Count; there is a fish in the glass. I think I will take the powder with wine. [*Steps to table.*]

COUNT [*follows her*]. And don't you like de little fish?

JESSIE. No, I can't say that I do.

SHURE [*stepping from behind screen, dipping his hand into bowl and pulling out goldfish and eating it—a piece of carrot made the shape of a goldfish*]. Well, I'm very fond of fish myself. [*Ducks back behind screen again.*]

COUNT. You are certainly looking with your face much better. How do you feel? Are you yet ready now to go out to dine with me?

JESSIE. But, Count, I must find the servant and instruct her to clear up these dishes. You will please excuse me for a moment. [*Exit.*]

SHURE. And please excuse me for life.

COUNT [*assuming natural voice—Charlie's—and taking off beard*]. This is where I get even with Jessie. I took a young lady to the theater one evening and Jessie found it out, and such a time I had to square myself. She called me a flirt—

SHURE. Serves you right!

CHARLIE [*looking quickly about*]. What's that? I thought I heard a voice. [*Resumes.*] Jessie called me a flirt, said I was not true to her, and said that she never flirted in her life. I was over to my tailor and tried on this costume to attend a masquerade ball next Tuesday evening. They told me that this disguise was so complete that my best friends wouldn't know me, and they persuaded me to go out on the street with it on, and who should I meet but Jessie. She didn't know me. I winked at her and she smiled in return. [*Shure throws book at Charlie. Charlie turns, Shure ducks.*] This flat must be haunted. [*Resumes.*] I spoke to her and she answered, and I passed myself off as Count von Rensse-

ler, a German. I made an appointment to call this evening and take her out to dine. [*Looks at door.*] Here's where Charlie gets even. [*Hears Jessie returning and puts beard on again.*]

SHURE. But where do I get even?

*Enter JESSIE.*

JESSIE. Really, Count, I can't go out to dine with you this evening.

SHURE [*aside*]. No, Count; take me instead. I'm so hungry.

COUNT. Vat! You can't go? Dis is von great big vat you call a trick.

JESSIE. Sir! It is not a trick——

COUNT. Aha! I see it all. You are making foolishness mit me. You have other lovers.

JESSIE. 'Tis false! I have no lover. I never cared for any man.

SHURE [*aside*]. That's right. She never even cared for my book.

COUNT. You have no lover?

JESSIE. None whatever.

COUNT. How about Charlie?

JESSIE. Charlie? Who is Charlie?

SHURE [*aside*]. Yes, where does Charlie get off at?

COUNT [*throwing off beard*]. Well, then, who am I——

JESSIE [*starting in surprise*]. [*Aside.*] I'll have to pretend I knew him all the time. [*Rushes towards him.*] Why, Charlie, you are the dearest and best boy in the world. I knew you all the time. You couldn't fool me. [*Charlie and she embrace.*]

SHURE [*looks over top of screen and sees them embracing; tries to hug himself and falls over screen, still holding book in his hand*].

CHARLIE. And who is this man? Another product of one of your flirtations?

JESSIE. No; he is a miserable book agent, who has been bothering me to death for the last hour.

SHURE [*coming forward*]. I have here a little book which contains all knowledge pertaining to the art of lovemaking, and a great deal of other information——

CHARLIE. Also, how to throw a book agent downstairs. [*Grabs Shure and rushes him out the door. Crash is heard as Shure is supposed to fall downstairs.*]

JESSIE. It just serves him right. I'm glad you threw him out. He had me nearly crazy. [*Suddenly excited.*] But he has on your coat.

CHARLIE. Never mind the coat, dear. All I want is your promise that you'll never flirt again.

JESSIE. I promise with all my heart. This has been a great lesson to me. But come, let's get ready for lunch. Papa will be here shortly and we'll all lunch together.

CHARLIE. Oh, I forgot to tell you that I met your father and he said to tell you that he would not be home until quite late this evening. So I'll flirt with you.

JESSIE. Well, so much the better—we can enjoy ourselves so much better alone. [*Both sit at table.*] I never flirt, Charlie.

*Enter SHURE, with clothes torn, hair all mussed up, and in dilapidated condition generally; book torn, in one hand, Charlie's coat in other hand, coat in rags.*

SHURE. Pardon me, you do but don't know it. This little book also tells how to mend coats [*curtain commences to descend*] and other valuable information particularly pertaining to how you should usher a gentleman from your house. [*Still talks as curtain descends.*]

[*When Shure makes his appearance, Jessie falls back in chair exhausted, and Charlie looks at him in deep disgust—all forming tableau.*]

CURTAIN.





